

WOZ WAY PLAZA: SIGN 2

From 1850 – 1851 San José had the distinction of being California's first state capital. That same year, however, the city received 32 inches of rain, twice the yearly average, causing the Guadalupe to rise above its banks, devastating the Plaza, the area in which California's first State House was located. The Legislature soon began looking for a new capital city.

Since San José was founded on the banks of the Guadalupe in 1777, winter floods have caused millions of dollars in damage. Now, a variety of flood protection solutions have been put in place from Highway 280 all the way to the San Francisco Bay.

An underground concrete bypass begins here at Woz Way and runs parallel to the river, redirecting high, fast-moving water and emptying it back into the river at a place where the river is wider and able to handle the flow. This bypass design solution did not require the natural river channel to be widened or deepened, which would have endangered native fish and wildlife, including Steelhead trout and Chinook salmon. Nearby public facilities such as the Children's Discovery Museum, as well as the light rail system and the surrounding neighborhoods are also protected.

A four-foot high concrete wall keeps water from entering the bypass until it rises above the wall, ensuring that enough water is retained in the natural street for the river's fish. Several other ecologically-sound flood-protection structures are located around the plaza: concrete terraces planted with native vegetation stabilize the river's banks while artificial boulders create pockets of quieter water in which fish can rest.